

## Duxbury's Memorial Boulders

by Rev. Canon Robert Merry

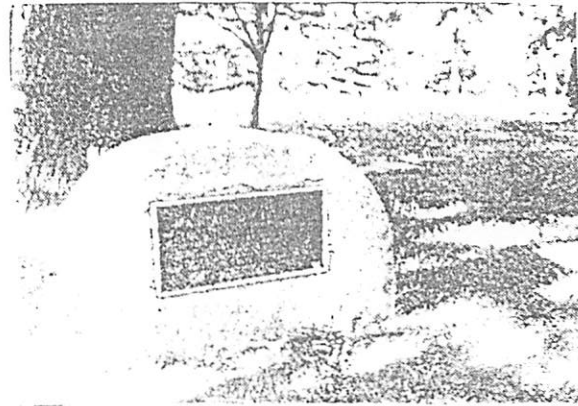
How do we perpetuate the memorial of things past? What devices has the race used to remember people and events gone by? How has the race of mankind kept alive in contemporary experience what has disappeared? It is a question worth pondering. The pyramids of ancient Egypt are examples of one attempt. St. Peter's in Rome and Westminster Abbey are others, communicating a glorious past, and furnishing living memorials. Ruins of ancient Babylonia and Greece speak to us eloquently of the great days now gone but somehow present for us. Iraq as the possible site of Western civilization is currently seeking to restore artifacts as is China an officially atheistic nation spending millions to refurbish former houses of worship.

To mention these attempts at memorials reminds us of the ways we have sought to retain a modicum of the meaning of the past into the present. It is basically an appreciation of the significant fact that some people and events have more than a contemporary significance. Many attempts in this direction have ended in failure, as the current unearthing of the Mayan ruins of the Yucatan peninsular testify. I recall a boulder in the Green Mountains of Vermont a few miles above Woodstock which marks the moment when in 1826 Daniel Webster addressed a crowd of 10,000 people. Today it is so obscured that the nearest human dwelling is a mile away. "Sic transit gloria mundi—Thus passes away the glory of the world," as we often say.

Duxbury tried to memorialize segments of its glorious past as it celebrated its Tercentary in 1937 by a series of granite slabs—13 of them—located around town to remind us of significant past events such as the shipyards along Blue Fish River, the first department store in America (Ford's Store), the building of Gurnet Bridge and so on. I wrote an account of these granite slab memorials, listed in such a way that one could take an afternoon or a morning and visit each of them. On reading this Ladd MacMillan told me he climbed into his car and spent 2 hours checking them out.

Over the years Duxbury has memorialized people by means of "Boulders" located in spots appropriate for the event or person. And I decided the same method of listing would be helpful for this enterprise. So far as I can tell and I have consulted the town historian Katherine Pillsbury and the town clerk, Nancy Oates,

this cemetery is the oldest "continuously maintained" graveyard in the entire country.



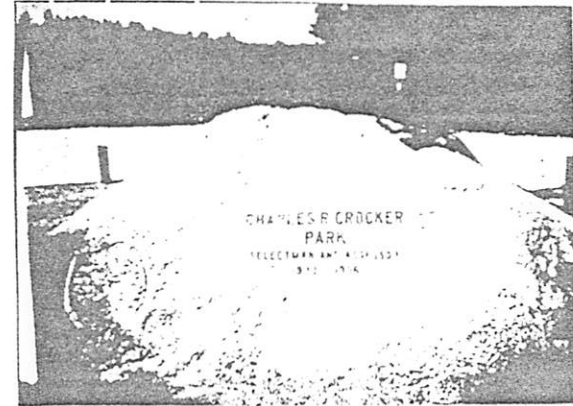
Oldest cemetery in America.

From here it is an easy distance to our next boulder on the northeast corner of the lawn surrounding the Town Offices. Simply go down Depot St. to Tremont, cross Tremont and up the bank and the boulder will appear immediately on the left.

It says quite simply: "George Partridge: Teacher—Soldier—Statesman" 1740-1828. It is a real pity that no more is said about this extraordinary person who taught school many years, served as postmaster, then took part in the Continental Congress and was one of the signers of the Treaty of Paris that ended the war with England, and he left a large sum of money both to the Unitarian Church and for the erection and support of an Academy that bears his name—unhappily buried to the ground in 1937. Quite by accident I was to know more about this man when descendants of the Richardson family invited me to hold a committal service for a member who had died. This family owned a large burial plot now filled with grave markers but the entire area was dominated by an obelisk dedicated to George Partridge who was also buried in the enclosure. I copied the inscription on the monument which reads, "George Partridge Died July 7, 1828. A benevolent upright man and good citizen. He left a liberal sum to the Unitarian Church of which he was a member. Although he lived a single life, he felt a deep interest in the welfare of the young, and bequeathed a legacy for the erection and support of an Academy that bears his name." The Academy of course is gone but the endowment funds managed by a group of Duxbury trustees still provides college scholarships to those in need.

We now must double back up Tremont St. to

Hall's Corner employing 40 horses and a comparable number of carriages. He soon married the boss's daughter and along with his paying job began to do all kinds of volunteer work for the town. These soon led to actual paying work for the town, especially in building streets. He ran for office and served as selectman and assessor for 23 years. Few men in town have amassed the reservoir of love and good will that Charlie did. This is why I especially appreciated the invitation to dedicate this boulder and park in his name.



A memorial to Charles R. Crocker

Our next stop is not exactly a boulder but it has the effect of one. Actually it is a granite scroll on the lawn of the American Legion Hall which stands opposite Duxbury's one traffic light at the corner of 3A and Route 14. It is such a beautiful work of art I had to phone the Legion Commander Jerry Dewing to ask about it. It bears a quotation by the poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox above the base inscription commending our veterans who stood firm in national danger. Jerry volunteered the information that this unusually striking monument was done from a total of 8 submissions and this particular design was drawn up by a Duxbury High School Senior by the name of Christine Dimascio. Intrigued by this I took a chance and phoned one of the 6 or 8 Dimascios in the phone book, and got her father himself on the line. He was proud to relate Christine's achievements, that she took an art course at Emerson College and then went to California with a job at Walt Disney studios. I phoned Jerry back with what I thought was new information and discovered that Christine received an Eben Briggs scholarship to go there. And all this from the granite scroll on the Legion Hall lawn.

I think it appropriate to add a word about our veterans

listing would be helpful for this enterprise. So far as I can tell and I have consulted the town historian Katherine Pillsbury and the town clerk, Nancy Oates, and to the best of their knowledge this is the first attempt to list them with their messages. Perhaps as with my report on Duxbury's Tercentenary granite slabs this kind of listing will assist joggers as well as bicyclists to refresh their minds with Duxbury's rich historic legacy.

What appears as the oldest granite boulder in town, and certainly the most significant, is the one at Myles Standish's home site. This is perhaps the best place to begin.



Myles Standish Memorial Boulder

It is located on a high bluff overlooking the junction of Kingston and Duxbury bays and Plymouth Harbor, and bears the legend "Here stood the house where Myles Standish lived and died." There is a path down the far side of the bluff leading to a granite square which bears the words: "Here lay the spring used by Myles Standish until it was wiped out in the great storm of 1851." This spot raises questions: "How could a spring of fresh water gush out of the ground not 50 yards from a salt water bay?" and again, "Why did Myles Standish and his descendants for 130 years lift their water supply up this bluff when well water was accessible on level ground so near at hand?" I will not try to detail high points in Myles' life as these are so well known, especially the apocryphal one of his sending John Alden to propose marriage for him to Priscilla Mullins. This tale merits incredibility the more one gets to know the great military leader of the Pilgrim band.

The next significant boulder is found at the end of a mile and a half jog to the Old Burial Ground on Chestnut St. at the corner of Pilgrim By-Way. Here are buried many of the Mayflower passengers and their descendants. The cemetery is now closed as a national historic landmark. The boulder says in summary that

endowment funds managed by a group of Duxbury trustees still provides college scholarships to those in need.

We now must double back up Tremont St. to Mayflower where we turn right nearly a mile into our Duxbury Town Forest. In the middle of this forest there lies a concrete platform surrounded by a boulder bearing the inscription "Duxbury Town Forest, Dedicated to Frederick B. Knapp, Educator, Publicist, Forester 1857-1932." Mr. Knapp was among the first in the country to recognize the need for conservation of our woodlands and meadows and open space in general. He came to Duxbury as the founder and headmaster of Powder Point School for Boys which flourished from its founding in 1886 until it closed in 1926. Summers it was a hotel for visitors, and for many years after its closing it was the "National Sailors Home." I remember Mr. Knapp well as he was my father's partner in establishing Duxbury's Fire Department. He was a visionary, and he made a good balance for my father who was a practical down-to-earth business man and entrepreneur. They accomplished many things for the welfare of the town especially in establishing a town water system. He had a high-pitched voice and a gray short square beard that waved like a toy flag when he got excited.

We now return to Tremont St. whose corner we see the Central Fire Station and our next boulder on the right surrounded by modest shrubbery. It bears the legend "Dedicated to the Departed Firemen." It is appropriate that we pause here right after acknowledging these two men as the department founders.

I always felt close to the fire department as the No. 1 Fire Station was located just below our home on Washington St. and members of the Merry family were usually first to ring the bell calling for volunteers to deal with a fire. It is appropriate that these men who so devotedly risk their lives for the safety of the rest of us are remembered in this way.

Now to the right we turn onto Tobey Garden St. After about a half mile and then down a gentle hill we come to a park on our right. On July 21 this park was dedicated to the memory of Charles R. Crocker. It was my privilege to do this dedication as Charles Crocker was one of my favorite people when I was growing up in town. I was a particularly sensitive teenager and he unlike so many town officials always treated me as a equal, always listening to anything I might say as I stopped in the town office to pick up my pay for forest fire service of shoveling the school walks. Charles Crocker is the best illustration I ever knew of the exemplification of the American dream. 2 Rhode Island chickens and rooster. He took lodgings with a Katherine Russell and a job at the Atlas tack factory at the dam of the Old Mill pond. Early on he switched jobs and went to work for Harvey Cushing, who ran a livery stable at

was new information and discovered that Christine received an Eben Briggs scholarship to go there. And all this from the granite scroll on the Legion Hall lawn.

I think it appropriate to add a word about our veterans and how important it is to acknowledge our debt to them as the Legion helps us do every Memorial and Armistice Days. Americans living with 2 friendly neighbors north and south and with 2 mighty oceans on our shores do not often think how blessed we are with these 2 great facts. This was brought home to me when I was traveling in Mongolia, the northern border of China. As our bus pulled up to our hotel around sunset after a day's drive there was the most deafening sound like several thunder storms. Our guide, on our asking what this was all about said, "That is the Chinese army at cannon practice." This of course was their way not only of practicing gunnery but impressing their enemies with what lay in store for them if they should decide to cross the border. We Americans are justly proud of the men and women in our armed forces who now are called upon to lead the rest of the armies of the world in maintaining a just peace.

Our next boulder is far away from this spot and may merit a journey all by itself, especially in the harvest season. To reach it we drive back to Tobey Garden St. to 3A and turn left to pass Dead Man's curve, taking another left to Route 14. We proceed nearly a mile on Route 14 to Temple St. on the right. Going down Temple one block to Church St. the boulder appears on the left in front of a couple of ancient farming artifacts and says "Stephen Gifford 1845, Stanley Merry 1964, and commemorates the crucial place that cranberry cultivation had in the days of sailing ships when its consumption cured the curse of long ship voyages and fresh vegetables were impossible to carry. It so happens



Gifford/Merry Memorial Boulder

## Calnan-Claypool



Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Calnan

Jo A. Claypool, daughter of Mrs. Joan Claypool and the late William Claypool of Greenwich, CT., and Jeffrey Calnan, son of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Calnan of Duxbury, were wed on Saturday, Sept. 28, at the Chapel-by-the-Sea in Newport, RI. The evening ceremony was officiated by Father Benjamin Reese, followed by a reception at the Naval War College Officer's Club.

Attending the bride was Patricia Ganey as matron of honor. Carolyn Calnan, Michele Creamer, Barbara Cooper, Anne Houston, Cynthia Mesmer, and Elizabeth Rand were bridesmaids. The bride's nieces, Lee Anne Claypool and Emily Claypool served as junior bridesmaids.

Best man was the bridegroom's brother, Douglas Calnan. The bridegroom's brother David Calnan, the bridegroom's nephew Jeffrey Robinson, the bride's brother Peter Claypool, along with David Bloch, Christopher Marshall, Robert O'Donnell, and Andrew Rodgers were ushers. The bridegroom's nephew Sean Robinson served as ringbearer.

## The Lobsters Are Almost Here!

There aren't many good reasons to get up at 2 am but making fresh lobster rolls at Duxbury Pilgrim Church is one of them. Oct. 25 is an all-church event with a "role for everyone." And everyone is pitching in by working to make the popular sale a success. Proceeds will be going to a variety of church projects, including improved access for the handicapped at the church.

Businesses, organizations, and individuals have been approached throughout the Duxbury area to take advantage of this delicious lunch/dinner of fresh, all meat lobster roll and chips for \$5.50. They will go on sale at the church at 5:30 am for people setting off to work. They will continue to be sold until 8pm and free delivery will be provided on orders of six or more rolls in the Duxbury area, 10-8.

Seniors in the area are invited to come for a luncheon on Oct. 25 from 11:30-1. The cost will be \$5.50 with beverage and dessert supplied by the church. For luncheon reservations call 934-0498 or 934-6028.

The Lobster Roll Sale is on Oct. 25, but orders need to be placed now! The deadline is Oct. 17 so call right away to place family, business, or organization orders. The numbers to call are: 837-8034, 837-4331, 934-0805, 934-2596.

## American Legion Auxiliary Installation

Newly-elected officers of the Legion Auxiliary will be installed at 7:30 pm on Monday, Oct. 21, in Duxbury Legion Hall.

Officers are Ann Reid, president; Rosemary Parkman, senior vice president; Patricia Cuneo, junior vice president; Marian Costello, secretary; Nancy Fletcher, treasurer; Daria Gallerani, historian; Beverly Johnson, chaplain; and Mary Shirley, sgt.-at-arms.

### Christmas Gift Shop for Veterans

Ann Reid, president reminds members that items for the Christmas Gift Shop for Veterans may be brought to the auxiliary meeting on Monday, Oct. 21, or call 934-5059 for pickup.

These gifts are donated to the Christmas Gift Shop in the Brockton VA Hospital. Patients may choose gifts for their immediate family. They are gift wrapped and mailed at no expense to the veteran. New gifts for children, men and women of \$3 value are needed. The public is

## BOULDERS

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that this industry was chiefly responsible for Duxbury's choice of the aquifer method of water supply when it instituted town water. It is appropriate that it be recognized today as this enterprise is the only remaining industry in town. A brief word from my brother Stan's report on cranberries that he wrote for the "Duxbury Book" that the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society published in 1987 as their contribution to the celebration of our 350th anniversary of Duxbury: "Captains of sailing vessels making long ocean passages noticed that the crew was free from scurvy, caused by a deficiency of Vitamin C, when the sailors' diet included some cranberry sauce each week. Cranberries were easily stored in water filled barrels, remaining fresh for several months in the cool hold of the ship, the natural wax coating on mature berries keeping them from rotting. They required only sugar and boiling water to make a good sauce.

So in this and many other ways Duxbury tries to keep its past alive in the hearts and minds of its citizens. Boulders, granite slabs, date-boarded houses, endowment funds, traditional ceremonies as on patriotic holidays combine to remind us that we are inheritors of a proud tradition, but it also places on us a clear obligation to update our artifacts, lest their messages be lost in the dust bin of history.

## Calling All Ghosts and Goblins

Afraid to walk the gloomy and horrifying streets of Duxbury on Halloween Night? Embarrassed to put on a coat over your costume? Come join the DHS National Honor Society as it hosts the first annual Halloween Extravaganza on Oct. 31.

The evening promises to fulfill every child's desire for a thrilling Halloween. With a costume contest, games and prizes, and ghost stories by the famed Robert McDonough, there is sure to be something for every young heart. Don't worry parents, you are ensured an enjoyable time as well.

Both safe and friendly, the Holy Family Parish Center will provide accommodations for this occasion. The party will last from 5:30 until 8:30 pm and will cost \$3 per child. There will be a \$10 maximum per family, all proceeds to benefit future NHS community projects and scholarships. All that the group asks of you, in addition to the entrance fee, is to come decked in the most